

OIL AND GAS

GEOPHYSICAL EXPLORATION

1. Types of Activities Regulated

A person or firm planning to conduct geophysical¹ exploration must have a geophysical exploration permit issued by the county clerk and recorder.

Statute: 82-1-101, MCA

Contact: COUNTY CLERK AND RECORDER

2. Application Requirements

- 1) Prior to beginning the exploration, the applicant must file a Notice of Intent with the clerk and recorder in each county where the exploration will occur.
- 2) The Montana Secretary of State's Office requires the designation of an authorized resident agent to contact in case of legal action related to the exploration. In addition, a surety bond must be filed with the Secretary of State to indemnify property owners against potential property damage resulting from the exploration.

Statute: 82-1-102 through 104, MCA

3. Permitting Procedures

- 1) When notified that the surety bond has been filed, the county clerk and recorder will issue an exploration permit valid for that calendar year. The county clerk forwards a notice of the application to the Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (BOGC), which then advises the clerk's office whether the applicant is or is not in compliance with all applicable laws and rules. The BOGC is responsible for taking action to ensure compliance.
- 2) Before beginning operations, the permit holder must notify the surface users of the land of the schedule of exploration activities. The surface user

¹ Types of geophysical exploration methods include seismic, gravity and magnetic—among others.

is responsible for providing the applicant with the name of a contact person. Written permission from the surface owner is required to discharge shot holes within a prescribed distance from some structures and water features.

- 3) Within three months after any firing of shot points in seismic exploration, the permit holder must file a report with the county clerk and recorder. Shot holes must be plugged as specified by the BOGC unless otherwise agreed to between the surface owner and the company. When the exploration is completed, the land surface must be restored.
- 4) Exploration crews operating in the state must comply with crew identification requirements established by the BOGC.

Statute: 82-1-101 through 108, MCA

Rule: ARM 36.22.501-504

Contact: COUNTY CLERK AND RECORDER

BOARD OF OIL AND GAS CONSERVATION

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
CONSERVATION

Oil and Gas Conservation Division

SECRETARY OF STATE
Business Services Bureau

4. **Fees**

The fee for a geophysical exploration permit is \$5 per year.

Statute: 82-1-105, MCA

OIL AND GAS

1. Types of Activities Regulated

A notice of intention to explore and drill for oil and gas, including coal bed methane, on private or state lands² must be filed with the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (BOGC) and permits to drill are required. Wells must comply with spacing units and be operated in compliance with the BOGC's regulations and established pooling orders. Operators must also comply with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's discharge regulations. See WATER QUALITY PERMITTING, p. 185. If water discharged from a well is to be put to a beneficial use, a permit from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation may be required (see WATER APPROPRIATIONS - GROUND WATER, p. 176 and WATER APPROPRIATIONS - SURFACE DIVERSIONS, p 179).

Statute: 82-11-101, *et seq.*, MCA

Rule: ARM 36.22.601, *et seq.*

Contact: BOARD OF OIL AND GAS CONSERVATION

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
CONSERVATION
Oil and Gas Conservation Division

2. Application Requirements

The notice of intention to drill must include information identifying the area where the proposed activity will occur. Well logs must be kept and filed with the BOGC; surface lands restored; fresh water supplies protected; and wells drilled, cased, operated and plugged in accordance with Board rules. A bond must be posted to guarantee proper abandonment procedures. No exploration or development drilling may take place until a permit is issued.

Rule: ARM 36.22.601-602

² The BOGC's jurisdiction over federal lands is limited to the authority granted by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in a Memorandum of Understanding. The BOGC has no jurisdiction over wells drilled on land held in trust by the United States for tribes or Indian allottees.

3. **Permitting Procedures**

- 1) After the permit is issued, an oil or gas operator or developer must give advance written notice of the proposed drilling operations to the surface owner of record and any purchaser under contract for deed. The owner or operator of an oil or gas well on state-owned land must notify the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation in advance of any operations.
- 2) The operator is responsible for advertising a notice of pending permit for a well in undeveloped (wildcat) areas in the *Helena Independent Record*, and in a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the well is located. Wells located in BOGC delineated fields need not be advertised, except under certain conditions. Advertisements must follow a format prescribed by the BOGC in rule and must advise of the procedure required to request a hearing. If no request for hearing is received within the 10-day notice period, the permit may be administratively approved. The staff is required to refer an application for permit to drill to the BOGC for notice and public hearing.
- 3) Prior to the development of a coal bed methane well, the developer must offer a reasonable water mitigation agreement to each ground water right holder with a well that is within 1 mile of the coal bed methane well or within one-half mile of a well that is adversely affected by the coal bed methane well. See also WATER APPROPRIATIONS - GROUND WATER: Coal Bed Methane Wells, p. 179.
- 4) If the project complies with applicable statutes, rules and regulations, a permit is issued. Operations must occur within the terms and conditions of the permit and the BOGC administrator has the authority to impose additional permit conditions if it is warranted.

Statute: 82-10-503, 82-11-122, 123 and 175, MCA

Rule: ARM 36.22.601, 602 and 604

4. **Fees**

Permit fees for oil or gas well drilling are:

- 1) For each well with an estimated depth of 3,500 feet or less, \$25;
- 2) From 3,501 feet to 7,000 feet, \$75;

- 3) 7,001 feet and deeper, \$150.

The BOGC also collects a privilege and license tax to fund the services of the board that is 3/10 of 1 percent of the value of each barrel of crude petroleum and each 10,000 cubic feet of natural gas produced, stored, saved or marketed.

Statute: 82-11-118, 131 and 137, MCA

Rule: ARM 36.22.603

OPERATIONS ON STATE LANDS: GEOPHYSICAL EXPLORATION

1. Types of Activities Regulated

The Board of Land Commissioners may issue a geophysical exploration permit on state-owned lands for the purpose of prospecting and exploring for oil and gas.

Rule: ARM 36.25.230, *et seq.*

Contact: BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
CONSERVATION
Trust Land Management Division
Minerals Management Bureau

2. Application Requirements

A person wishing to prospect for oil and gas by geophysical methods on state land for which an oil and gas lease is not held must submit two copies of a permit application to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The application must include a legal description of the areas where the exploration will take place. Descriptions of multiple sections of state-owned land are allowed. A permit from the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation is also required (see OIL AND GAS, p. 124).

Rule: ARM 36.25.230, *et seq.*

3. Permitting Procedures

- 1) The applicant must be registered to do business in Montana and file a surety bond with the Montana Secretary of State's office. The name and

permanent address of the geophysical exploration firm that will be doing the actual seismic work must also be submitted.

- 2) The applicant must provide proof that the surface owner or lessee has been notified of the approximate time schedule of activities. Permission from oil and gas lessees is also required to conduct exploration on lands covered by an oil and gas lease.
- 3) A geophysical exploration permit is valid for one year and does not grant any rights to an oil and gas lease or any other interests in the land.
- 4) There are several conditions for conducting exploration activities designed to protect the land surface.

Rule: ARM 36.25.231 and 232

Contact: SECRETARY OF STATE
Business Services Bureau

4. **Fees**

A fee of \$50 is required for a seismic permit application. The DNRC charges \$50 per shot hole or \$100 per mile for vibroseis.

Rule: ARM 36.2.1003 and 36.25.236

OPERATIONS ON STATE LANDS: OIL AND GAS

1. **Types of Activities Regulated**

The Montana Board of Land Commissioners is authorized to lease any state-owned minerals for the purpose of oil and gas exploration or drilling and development. This includes private or state oil and gas rights beneath state surface-owned land and state oil and gas rights beneath non-state owned land. Coal bed methane is part of the oil and gas estate. Corporations not incorporated in Montana must obtain a certificate of authority to transact business in the state from the Montana Secretary of State's office prior to applying for a lease.

Statute: 77-3-401, MCA

Rule: ARM 36.25.203-204

Contact: DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
CONSERVATION
Trust Land Management Division
Minerals Management Bureau

SECRETARY OF STATE
Business Services Bureau

2. **Permitting Procedures**

- 1) A person wishing to lease state lands for oil and gas operations must submit an application on forms furnished by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).
- 2) Sale of oil and gas leases are normally held once each quarter (March, June, September and December). The sale of each lease takes place through competitive oral bidding.
- 3) Notice of each sale is published in the *Rocky Mountain Oil Journal* (formerly the *Montana Oil Journal*) or in one of the state's general circulation publications. Notice is also posted on the DNRC, Minerals Management Bureau website and mailed to an interested persons mailing list.
- 4) The primary term of an oil and gas lease may be for no more than 10 years and no less than five years unless the Board deems that a shorter term is necessary. An oil and gas lease issued on state lands may not exceed 640 acres, except that any section surveyed by the United States containing more than 640 acres may be included under one lease. Leased lands must be generally compact and contiguous.
- 5) Owners of state oil and gas leases may enter into agreements with others for drilling and other operations. Pooling agreements are also possible. The Board may approve assignment of oil and gas leases to qualified assignees.
- 6) The owner or operator of an oil or gas well on state-owned land must notify the DNRC in advance of any operations.
- 7) The lessee is required to submit a plan for location of all facilities to the surface owner or lessee and is required to consult with the surface owner or lessee regarding reasonable location of access roads.

- 8) Oil and gas operations on state lands are subject to other applicable state regulatory authorities (see OIL and GAS, p. 127).

Statute: 77-3-404, 405, 421, 429, 430 and 438, MCA

Rule: ARM 36.25.203, 205, 206 and 217

3. Fees

The fee for an oil and gas lease application is \$15 and \$25 for a lease issuance. The lease rental fee is \$1.50 per acre but not less than \$100 per year. The delay drilling penalty is \$1.25 per acre in year six of the lease and \$2.50 per acre in years seven through 10 of the lease in addition to the rental fee. Royalties are 12.5 percent on gas and 13 percent on oil.

Rule: ARM 36.2.1003 and 36.25.208-210

UNDERGROUND INJECTION CONTROL

1. Types of Activities Regulated

Underground injection control permits are required from the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (BOGC) for new injection wells or to convert existing wells to injection for the purposes of disposal, storage or enhanced recovery of oil or gas (class II wells).

Underground injection wells that inject hazardous and nonhazardous wastes below the lowermost under ground source of drinking water (class I); inject super-heated steam, water or other fluids into formations in order to extract minerals (class III); other injection wells that are not included in categories I-III and are usually shallow wells that inject nonhazardous fluids (class V); and underground injection wells on reservation lands are permitted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Class IV wells that inject hazardous or radioactive wastes into or above underground sources of drinking water are prohibited.

Statute: 82-11-101, *et seq.*, MCA

Rule: ARM 36.22.1401, *et seq.*

Contact: BOARD OF OIL AND GAS CONSERVATION

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
CONSERVATION
Oil and Gas Conservation Division

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Montana Office, Helena

2. Application Requirements

- 1) The application for an underground injection well filed with the BOGC must show the location of all wells and pipelines, a description of the formation, a description of the injection zone, logs and lithologic information, a description of the injected fluids and the names and addresses of the leaseholders and the surface owners. In addition, the applicant must submit a corrective action plan and fulfill bonding requirements.
- 2) A notice of application for an underground injection permit must be mailed to each current operator, lease owner and surface owner within the review area on or before the date the application is mailed to or filed with the BOGC.
- 3) Well abandonment plans must be filed with and approved by the BOGC. When wells have been plugged and the project completed, the land surface must be restored.

Rule: ARM 36.22.1307 and 36.22.1403-1425

4. Fees

The BOGC collects an annual injection fee of \$200 for each injection well.

Rule: ARM 36.22.1423

UNDERGROUND STORAGE OF NATURAL GAS ON STATE LANDS

1. Types of Activities Regulated

The Board of Land Commissioners is authorized to lease state lands for the underground storage of natural gas to public utilities that transport or distribute natural gas for public use.

Statute: 77-3-501, *et seq.*, MCA

Contact: DEPARTMENT NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Trust Land Management Division
Minerals Management Bureau

2. Permitting Procedures

- 1) The Board may order a hearing prior to issuance of a lease. A lessee must furnish a bond to indemnify the state against damage or loss.
- 2) Lease terms may not exceed 20 years. The lessee has a preferential right to renewal.

3. Criteria

The lessee must use all reasonable precautions to prevent waste of oil or gas developed on the land or injury to oil or gas deposits.